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House votes to expand legal safeguards for LGBTQ people

By KEVIN FREKING

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic-led House passed a bill Thursday that would enshrine LGBTQ protections in the nation's labor and civil rights laws, a top priority of President Joe Biden, though the legislation faces an uphill battle in the Senate. The bill passed by a vote of 224-206 with three Republicans joining Democrats in voting yes.

The Equality Act amends existing civil rights law to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identification as protected characteristics. The protections would extend to employment, housing, loan applications, education, public accommodations and other areas.



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., speaks about the Congress Equality Act, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

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Associated Press



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House votes to expand legal safeguards for LGBTQ people

Continued from Front

CSupporters say the law before the House on Thursday is long overdue and would ensure that every person is treated equally under the law.

"The LGBT community has waited long enough," said Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., who is gay and the bill's lead sponsor. "The time has come to extend the blessings of liberty and equality to all of Americans regardless of who they are and who they love."

Republicans broadly opposed the legislation. They echoed concerns from religious groups and social conservatives who worry the bill would force people to take actions that contradict their religious beliefs. They warned that faith-based adoption agencies seeking to place children with a married mother and father could be forced to close, or that private schools would have to hire staff whose conduct violates tenets of the school's faith.

"This is unprecedented. It's dangerous. It's an attack on our first freedom, the first freedom listed in the Bill of Rights, religious liberty," said Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La.

The House passed the Equality Act in the last Congress with unanimous Democratic support and the backing of eight Republicans, but Donald



Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., right, watches as Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., speaks about the Congress Equality Act, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

Trump's White House opposed the measure and it was not considered in the Senate, where 60 votes will be needed to overcome procedural hurdles. Democrats are trying to revive it now that they have control of Congress and the White House, but passage still appears unlikely in the evenly divided Senate.

The Supreme Court provided the LGBTQ community with a resounding victory last year in a 6-3 ruling that said the Civil Rights Act of 1964 applied to LGBTQ workers when it comes to barring discrimination on the basis of sex. Civil rights groups have encouraged Congress to follow up that

decision and ensure that anti-bias protections addressing such areas as housing, public accommodations and public services are applied in all 50 states. Biden made clear his support for the Equality Act in the lead-up to last year's election, saying it would be one of his first priorities.

Democratic Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon, D-Penn., said the Equality Act is needed to end "the patchwork of state laws" around gay rights and create "uniform nationwide protection."

"It's been personal since my baby sister came out to me almost 40 years ago," Scanlon said. "For many people all across this coun-

try and across this House, that is when the fight hits home." The debate among lawmakers on Capitol Hill also become personal. Rep. Marie Newman, D-Ill., whose daughter is transgender, tweeted a video of herself placing a transgender flag outside her office. Her office is across the hall from Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., who was recently blocked from serving on two committees because of past comments and tweets. "Our neighbor, @RepMTG, tried to block the Equality Act because she believes prohibiting discrimination against trans Americans is "disgusting, immoral, and evil." Thought

we'd put up our Transgender flag so she can look at it every time she opens her door.," Newman tweeted.

Greene responded with a video of her own in which she puts up a sign that reads: "There are Two genders: MALE and FEMALE. "Trust The Science!"

"Our neighbor, @RepMarieNewman, wants to pass the so-called "Equality" Act to destroy women's rights and religious freedoms. Thought we'd put up ours so she can look at it every time she opens her door," Greene tweeted.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., pointed to the exchange to advocate for the bill Thursday.

"It breaks my heart that it is necessary, but the fact is, and in fact we had a sad event here even this morning, demonstrating the need for us to have respect," Pelosi said, at one point pausing and taking a deep sigh. "Not even just respect, but take pride, take pride in our LGBT community." Gay and lesbian members of Congress spoke about how meaningful the bill is for them.

"Look, we're not asking for anything that any other American doesn't already enjoy," said Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H. "We just want to be treated the same. We just want politicians in Washington to catch up with the times and the Constitution." □



In this Nov. 28, 2020 file photo, a shopper wears a face mask and he walks past a store displaying a hiring sign in Wheeling, Ill.

Associated Press

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**
AP Economics Writer
WASHINGTON (AP) — Unemployed Americans who

have turned down job offers because they feared their prospective employers weren't providing suf-

Biden directive expands jobless aid to more unemployed

ficient protection from the coronavirus would qualify for jobless aid under a directive the Labor Department issued Thursday.

The measure would also expand a federal unemployment benefits program, established in last spring's economic relief package, to cover workers who have lost hours or who were laid off because of the pandemic. It would also cover school employees who lose jobs or work hours because of school closings.

The federal program, known as Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, made the self-employed and gig workers eligible for jobless aid for the first time. "Until now, unemployment insurance benefits during the pandemic have been too scattered and too uncertain," said Patricia Smith, senior adviser to the labor secretary. "That begins to change today, with many more workers now eligible for unemployment insurance benefits." Speaking to reporters, de-

partment officials declined to estimate how many Americans would now become newly eligible for jobless benefits.

The benefits will be made retroactive, officials said. People who applied for unemployment benefits after Dec. 27 can receive retroactive payments back to Dec. 6.

Those who applied before then and were turned down can receive retroactive payments dating back to when they first applied. □

GOP rallies solidly against Democrats' virus relief package

By **ALAN FRAM**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans are closing ranks against Democrats' proposed \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, even as the White House seemed to rule out a procedural Senate power play to protect one provision most treasured by progressives: a minimum wage hike.

Despite paper-thin congressional majorities, Democratic leaders were poised to push the sweeping package through the House on Friday. They were hoping the Senate, where changes seem likely, would follow quickly enough to have legislation on President Joe Biden's desk by mid-March.

By early Thursday, not one Republican in either chamber had publicly said he or she would back the legislation. GOP leaders were honing attacks on the package as a job killer that does too little to reopen schools or businesses shuttered for the coronavirus pandemic and that was not only wasteful but also even unscrupulous.

"I haven't seen a Republican yet that's found something in there that they agree with," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "I think all Republicans believe in three simple things: They want a bill that puts us back to work, back to school and back to health. This bill is



Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky., walks on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021.

too costly, too corrupt and too liberal."

The hardening opposition suggested that Biden's first major legislative initiative could encounter unanimous GOP opposition. That was a counterpoint to his refrain during his campaign about bringing the country together and a replay of the Republican wall that new President Barack Obama encountered in 2009 and most of his administration.

Democrats showed no signs of backing down against Republican claims that the bill was wasteful, too expensive and not focused enough on key needs like reopening schools.

"This kind of reflexive partisan opposition is not going to wash with the American people.

It wouldn't wash at any time, but it especially doesn't wash during this time of crisis," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Thursday.

By mid-day, the most suspense was over an anticipated opinion from Elizabeth MacDonough, the Senate's nonpartisan parliamentarian, that could either bolster or potentially kill Democrats' hopes of using the package to gradually raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 hourly by 2025. If MacDonough decides the minimum wage provi-

sion must come out of the relief package, it would all but kill it because on its own it lacks enough support to overcome a Republican filibuster. It takes 60 votes to halt that tactic and the Senate is divided 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris allowed to cast only tie-breaking votes.

Another alternative would be for Democrats to bust through decades of Senate precedent, ignore the parliamentarian's view and keep the wage provision in the bill with their 51 votes. But it is unclear if Democrats could achieve that. Some of their moderates oppose the minimum wage boost or want it dialed back, and

others could be reluctant to defy Senate precedents that way.

White House chief of staff Ron Klain seemed to rule that option out when asked directly about that scenario.

"Certainly, that's not something we would do," he told MSNBC host Joy Reid on Wednesday night. "We're going to honor the rules of the Senate and work within that system to get this bill passed."

Democrats are pushing the overall \$1.9 trillion measure through Congress under special rules that will let them avoid a Senate filibuster by Republicans. But those same rules prohibit provisions with only an "incidental" impact on the federal budget because they are chiefly driven by other policy purposes. The parliamentarian decides if provisions pass that test.

If MacDonough decides the minimum wage provision can remain in the bill, it would be a major boost for its proponents. But there would still be no guarantee the measure would survive because of opposition from some Democrats, suggesting that grueling bargaining on its final form would lie ahead.

The minimum wage has stood at \$7.25 since 2009. Winning the increase is a top priority for progressives at a time when Democrats control Congress and the White House. □

Indictment: militia leader pointed rifle at police in Ky.

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The leader of a pro-gun group that has staged armed protests has been indicted on federal charges for allegedly pointing a rifle at law enforcement while in Kentucky for a demonstration. John F. Johnson, who goes by "Grandmaster Jay," was indicted Wednesday on a charge of assaulting, resisting or impeding law enforcement and another charge for brandishing a firearm, The Courier Journal reported. Johnson could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted on the first

charge.

Johnson was arrested at his Ohio home in December on the federal charges. A federal complaint said Johnson pointed an AR-style rifle with the flashlight on, which "blinded" several officers on a roof in downtown Louisville.

Johnson's group, known as the NFAC, has an all-Black membership and often demonstrates against white supremacy and police violence.

The alleged incident occurred the day before the Kentucky Derby, when hun-

dreds of protesters peacefully marched to demand justice in the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor by Louisville police.

The indictment said Johnson must surrender all his firearms and ammunition to federal authorities.

Johnson is also facing five counts of endangerment in state court in connection with the same actions alleged in the federal case. An email sent to Johnson's attorney, a public defender, was not immediately answered Thursday afternoon. □



John Fitzgerald Johnson, also known as Grandmaster Jay, leads NFAC members on a march to Parc San Souci in downtown Lafayette, La., Saturday, Oct. 3, 2020.

Associated Press

AG: Olympics gymnastics coach dies by suicide after charges

By ANNA LIZ NICHOLS and ED WHITE

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A former U.S. Olympics gymnastics coach with ties to disgraced sport doctor Larry Nassar died by suicide Thursday after being charged with two dozen crimes, including forms of human trafficking, the state attorney general said.

The announcement from Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel came about three hours after a news conference where Nessel announced that John Geddert was charged with crimes, including sexual assault, human trafficking and running a criminal enterprise.

The charges were the latest fallout from the sexual abuse scandal involving Nassar, a former Michigan State University sports doctor now in prison.

Geddert was accused of turning his Michigan gym into a yearslong criminal enterprise by coercing girls to train under him and then verbally and physically abusing them.

He was accused of lying to investigators in 2016 when he denied ever hearing complaints about Nassar, who is serving decades in prison for sexually assaulting female athletes in a scandal that counted hundreds of victims and turned USA Gymnastics



In this March 3, 2012, file photo, gymnastics coach John Geddert is seen at the American Cup gymnastics meet at Madison Square Garden in New York.

Associated Press

upside down. Geddert, 63, was head coach of the 2012 U.S. women's Olympic gymnastics team, which won a gold medal. He has long been associated with Nassar, who was the Olympic team's doctor and also treated injured gymnasts at Twistars, Geddert's Lansing-area gym.

Geddert was accused of recruiting minors for forced labor, a reference to the gymnasts he coached, according to documents filed

in an Eaton County court. A message seeking comment was left with Geddert's attorney. Attorney General Dana Nessel said the coach used "force, fraud and coercion" for financial benefit.

"The victims suffer from disordered eating," Nessel said, "including bulimia and anorexia, suicide attempts and attempts at self harm, excessive physical conditioning, repeatedly being forced to per-

form even when injured, extreme emotional abuse and physical abuse, including sexual assault.

"Many of these victims still carry these scars from this behavior to this day," the attorney general said.

The charges against Geddert included two counts of sexual assault against a teen in 2012.

Nessel acknowledged that the case might not fit the common understanding of human trafficking. "We

think of it predominantly as affecting people of color or those without means to protect themselves ... but honestly it can happen to anyone, anywhere," she said. "Young impressionable women may at times be vulnerable and open to trafficking crimes, regardless of their stature in the community or the financial well-being of their families." Assistant Attorney General Danielle Hagaman-Clark said the charges against Geddert had "very little to do" with Nassar.

Geddert was suspended by Indianapolis-based USA Gymnastics during the Nassar scandal. He told families in 2018 that he was retiring. On his LinkedIn page, Geddert described himself as the "most decorated women's gymnastics coach in Michigan gymnastics history." He said his Twistars teams won 130 club championships. But Geddert was often portrayed in unflattering ways when Nassar's victims spoke during court hearings in 2018.

"What a great best friend John was to Larry for giving him an entire world where he was able to abuse so easily," said Lindsey Lemke, now a coach at the University of Arkansas. "You two sure do have a funny meaning of friendship. You, John Geddert, also deserve to sit behind bars right next to Larry." □



In this April 2019, file photo, provided by Los Alamos National Laboratory, barrels of radioactive waste are loaded for transport to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) at the Radioactive Assay Nondestructive Testing (RANT) facility in Los Alamos, N.M.

Associated Press

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) —

New Mexico is going after the federal government for

New Mexico goes to court over slow cleanup at U.S. nuclear lab

failing to make progress on cleaning up contamination left behind by decades of bomb-making and nuclear research at one of the nation's premier labs as concerns mount over plans to resume production of key components for the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

In a civil complaint filed in state district court Wednesday, New Mexico environment officials say a plan by the U.S. Energy Department lacks substantive and appropriate targets for dealing with waste at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

The state is seeking to end an agreement meant to guide long-term cleanup at the lab.

The consent order between New Mexico and federal government has been renegotiated over the years, with the latest iteration taking effect in 2016 despite criticism from nuclear watchdog groups and environmentalists about unclear milestones and a lack of consequences for falling short.

New Mexico Environment

Secretary James Kenney said court supervision is needed to renegotiate the terms to protect the community and environment.

"The department entered the 2016 consent order with high expectations, but almost five years later, our expectations are far from met," he said in a statement.

Officials with the Energy Department and Los Alamos National Laboratory did not immediately respond to questions about the complaint. □

After oil spill, Israel's fishermen net catch despite ban

By ILAN BEN ZION and
ALON BERNSTEIN
Associated Press

JISR AL-ZARQA, Israel (AP)

— After weathering a year of the coronavirus pandemic, the fishermen of an Arab village in central Israel have been dealt another blow by a mysterious oil spill in the Mediterranean.

Grappling with its worst ecological disaster in years, the government this week ordered a precautionary ban on selling seafood.

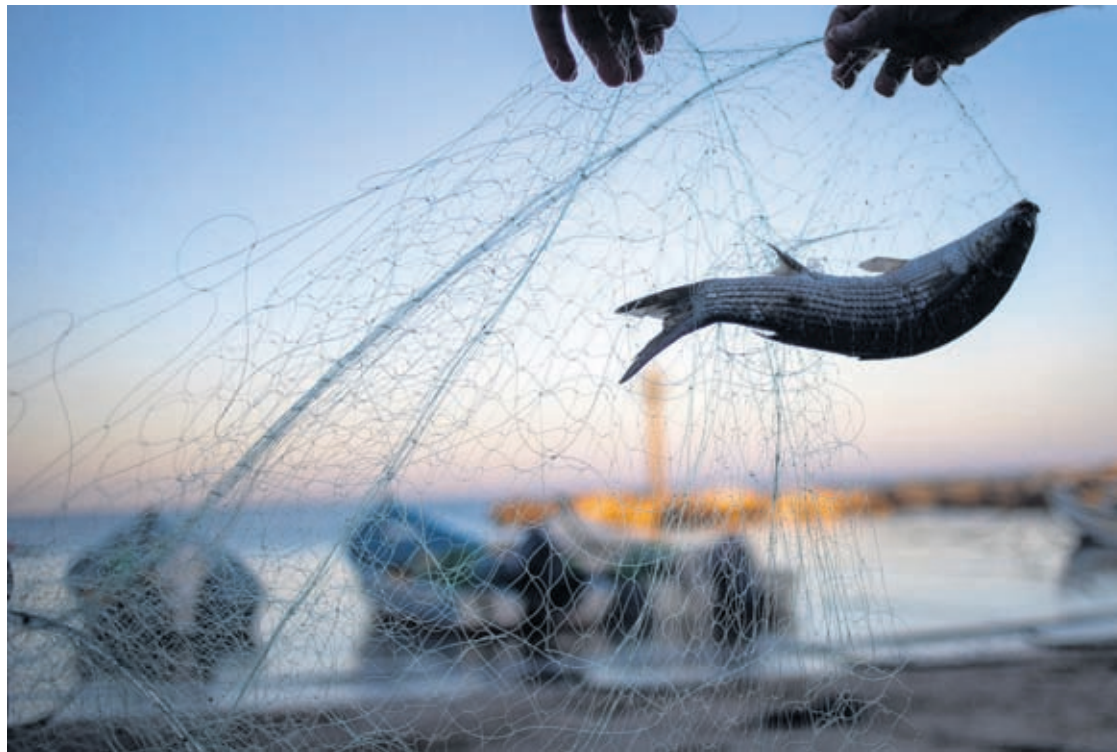
Despite the ban, Jisr al-Zarqa's fishermen went to sea Thursday to bring in their catch.

Sami Ali, a representative for the village's fishermen, insisted it was safe to keep on fishing.

"The tar floats on the sea, on the water, it doesn't penetrate deep. It does damage to the reefs, maybe also seaweed, the beach and many facilities. Also it damaged our equipment," he said. "But the fish do not eat things that are not natural."

Scientists disagree, and say it's far too risky to keep fishing as they continue to analyze the disaster.

Over 90% of Israel's 195 ki-



Fishermen remove fish from nets after returning from a fishing trip on the Mediterranean Sea, in the Israeli Arab village of Jisr al-Zarqa, Israel, in the early morning of Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021.

Associated Press

lometer (120 mile) Mediterranean coastline was covered in an estimated 1,000 tons of black tar, the result of an oil spill out at sea earlier this month. The pollution has swept north to neighboring Lebanon and has caused extensive damage to the ecosystem, killing seabirds, endangered green sea turtles and other marine life.

The government has not yet identified who it believes is responsible for the spill, and has blocked publication of details of the investigation, saying doing so could jeopardize its efforts to bring those responsible to justice. The clean-up is expected to take months. Authorities have banned people from visiting beaches because of the tar's tox-

icity, and on Wednesday the Health Ministry issued a ban on the sale of all Mediterranean seafood until further notice.

The ministry said that although it had yet to receive evidence indicating a health risk, the ban was meant as a precautionary measure. It said fish were being tested to determine the level of pollution, and

that it had notified fishermen and fishmongers of the ban.

Jisr al-Zarqa, an impoverished Arab village on Israel's coast south of Haifa, is already feeling the pains of the coronavirus pandemic's economic fallout. The community is one of Israel's poorest and has long protested what it considers discriminatory treatment by the Israeli government. Only half of the village's fishermen, around 20 people, went to sea Thursday to bring in the morning catch in spite of the ban.

While Ali isn't worried about pollution contaminating the fish, he is worried about how plunging sales this week have deepened the community's financial struggles.

Thousands of volunteers have taken up the task of cleaning the poisonous tar off Israel's coast. But every day the sea belches up fresh batches.

"No one knows how much tar is out there, at the bottom of the sea or other places," said Arik Rosenblum, director of EcoOcean, the organization leading the volunteer efforts. □

Pakistan, India agree to halt cross-border firing in Kashmir

By MUNIR AHMED
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan and India pledged Thursday to halt cross-border firing in the disputed region of Kashmir, promising to adhere to a 2003 accord that has been largely ignored, officials

from both sides said.

If implemented, the move would be a major step in defusing tensions in the highly militarized Himalayan region, which is divided between India and Pakistan and claimed by both in its entirety, and opens the possibility of a

broader detente between the two nuclear-armed rivals.

Artillery, rockets and small arms fire have been regularly exchanged between troops on opposite sides of the border, killing hundreds since the original cease-fire was signed. Civilians are caught in the crossfire whenever violence erupts, with dozens killed every year.

The two sides' militaries have now made vocal commitments, with senior generals reaching an understanding over a hotline on Wednesday, a joint statement said.

"Both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing" along the frontier, it said. "Existing mechanisms of hotline contact and border flag meetings will be

utilized to resolve any unforeseen situation or misunderstanding."

In India, Lt. Gen. D.S. Hooda, who was head of the Indian military's Northern Command from 2014 to 2016, welcomed the move, calling it "a significant, positive development given there has been steep escalation in the border skirmishes in last few years."

In Pakistan, retired army Gen. Talat Masood said he believed leaders in Washington and other world powers had helped reduce tension between Pakistan and India, adding that peace was in both countries' best interests.

It was unclear what prompted the two militaries to initiate contact over the hotline, but Pakistan has been urging the international community to

push India to resume dialogue.

Pakistani authorities say India has made more than 13,000 violations of the cease-fire in the past 18 years. India also alleges large-scale violations by the Pakistan army.

Since gaining independence from British rule in 1947, Pakistan and India have fought two of their three wars over control of Kashmir. Relations were strained in 2019, when Pakistan shot down an Indian warplane in Kashmir and captured a pilot in response to an airstrike by Indian aircraft targeting militants inside Pakistan. India at the time said the airstrikes targeted Pakistan-based militants responsible for a suicide bombing that killed 40 Indian troops in the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir. □



In this Oct. 1, 2016 file photo, Pakistan army soldiers take positions at Bagsar, a forward post on the Line of Control, that divides Kashmir between Pakistan and India, in Bhimber province, some 103 miles, 166 km, from Islamabad, Pakistan.

Associated Press

Hunger-striking Ethiopia politicians 'deteriorating' in jail

Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) —

Lawyers representing jailed Ethiopian opposition politicians say they are concerned for the lives of their clients, whose hunger strike has gone on for nearly a month and drawn international attention as they protest their treatment by the government.

"Four of them have continued with their hunger strike and their health is deteriorating quickly," lawyer Tokuma Daba told The Associated Press, saying he last visited them on Monday. "Our concern now is for their lives. We are told by medics that they need a sophisticated medical treatment, which is lacking now. It is really concerning."

The jailed politicians include media mogul-turned-politician Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, Hamza Adane and Dejene Tafa. They were arrested along with at least 16 others following the killing of a renowned singer, Hachalu Hundessa, in June 2020. Amid outrage over the killing, violence targeting ethnic minorities claimed the lives of several dozen people, mainly in the Oromia region.

Some ethnic Oromos feel their quest for more demo-



In this Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 file photo, opposition politician Jawar Mohammed speaks with The Associated Press at his house in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

cratic space and the freedom to choose their leaders has not been fulfilled since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in 2018. They accuse him of defaulting on some of his promises by arresting some politicians who returned to Ethiopia from abroad, including Jawar, after he assumed power.

The jailed politicians face charges including conspiring to dismantle the constitution by force and other terror-related offenses. They have rejected the

charges as politically motivated.

The prisoners' "treatment by the Ethiopian government is exacerbating a serious crisis, especially as their health deteriorates," former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and current Biden administration nominee for foreign aid chief Samantha Power tweeted last week, calling it critical for the government to "change course before it is too late."

The prisoners assert that their arrests were meant to

deny them the chance to take part in Ethiopia's upcoming national election in June. On Tuesday, Ethiopia's election board made it clear that politicians behind bars will not be able to present themselves as candidates.

Tokuma said his clients are conducting a hunger strike for several reasons including protesting the harassment and arrests of their supporters and family members. His clients also seek the release of all political prisoners.

The striking prisoners have rejected being treated in government-owned hospitals, preferring a private hospital. Last week Ethiopia's ambassador to the U.S., Fitsum Arega, tweeted that the offer to treat them at the "Ethiopian equivalent of Walter Reed" National Military Medical Center still stands.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court of Ethiopia ruled that the prisoners shall receive medical treatment from a private hospital but that the treatment should take place inside the Kaliti prison where they are held.

"This decision amounts to a death penalty. It's no less harsh than that."

Earlier this month, the head of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Daniel Bekele, said of the striking prisoners that "very close supervision is required to prevent any grave threat to their health and life and that reasonably justified demands of the prisoners must be addressed."

Quoting Kaliti prison officials, the commission said "most of the demands listed as reasons for the hunger strike are beyond the remit of the administration. And the prison administration does not mistreat the prisoners' visitors." □

Associated Press

Kremlin critic Navalny sent to prison outside Moscow

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been sent to a prison outside Moscow to serve his sentence, his lawyer said Thursday, a move that comes despite a demand by Europe's top human rights court for his release.

Navalny lawyer Vadim Kobzev didn't immediately say what prison he was sent to.

Russian news reports have previously indicated that Navalny, who has been held in a maximum-security jail in Moscow, would likely be sent to a facility in

western Russia.

Navalny, 44, Russian President Vladimir Putin's most vociferous foe, was arrested on Jan. 17 upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected the accusation and accused Navalny of cooperating with Western intelligence agencies claims he has ridiculed.

Earlier this month, Navalny was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison for violating the terms of his probation while convalescing in Germany.

The sentence stems from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that Navalny has rejected as fabricated and which the European Court of Human Rights has ruled to be unlawful.

Navalny's arrest has fueled a wave of protests that drew tens of thousands to the streets across Russia. Authorities have detained about 11,000 people, many of whom were fined or given jail terms ranging from seven to 15 days.

Russian officials have dismissed demands from the United States and the European Union to free Navalny and stop the crackdown on his supporters.



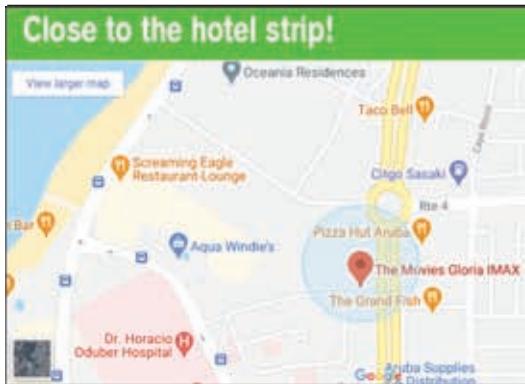
Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny stands in a cage in the Babuskinsky District Court in Moscow, Russia, Saturday, Feb. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

Moscow also rejected the ECHR ruling that, citing risks to Navalny's life in custody, ordered the Russian government to release him. The Russian government has rebuffed the court's demand as unlawful and

"inadmissible" meddling in Russia's home affairs.

Earlier this week, EU foreign ministers agreed to impose new sanctions against Russian officials linked to Navalny's jailing. □



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Gang clashes result in Ecuador's deadliest prison riots ever

By REGINA GARCIA CANO
and GONZALO SOLANO
Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuador experienced its deadliest prison riots ever this week when seemingly coordinated fights broke out in facilities in three different cities, leaving 79 inmates dead as of Wednesday and exposing the limited control that authorities have over people behind bars. Hundreds of police officers and military personnel converged on the prisons after the unrest began Monday night in the maximum-security wings as rival gangs fought for leadership. President Lenín Moreno, whose term ends in May, on Wednesday said he will ask other South American countries for help to tackle the crisis in Ecuador's prisons and acknowledged the system is deficient and lacks financial resources. Inmates in



Tear gas rises from parts of Turi jail where an inmate riot broke out in Cuenca, Ecuador, Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021.

two prisons attempted to keep fighting Wednesday despite heavy police response. Television footage showed smoke billowing

from one of the facilities. Some 70% of the country's prison population lives in the centers where the unrest occurred. The national

agency responsible for the prisons said 37 inmates died in the Pacific coast city of Guayaquil, 34 in the southern city of Cuenca and

eight in the central city of Latacunga. "Ecuadorian prisons are overpopulated, as they always have been, as are prisons in nearly every country," said Mark Ungar, a professor of political science at Brooklyn College in the U.S., who has researched prisons in Latin America. In addition "is this amazingly repetitive practice of putting members of different gangs within the same facility, which is kind of cardinal rule No. 1 not to do because their practices continue within the prisons," he added.

"So, the very fact of putting them together is a recipe for violence." Ungar said inadequate staffing in Latin American prisons limits the ability of authorities to patrol inmate interactions and makes it practically impossible to separate prisoners sufficiently to prevent violence. □

Associated Press

Honduras leader warns drug cooperation with U.S. endangered

By MARLON GONZÁLEZ
Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPÁ, Honduras (AP) — Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández says that antinarcotics co-

operation with the United States could "collapse" if U.S. authorities believe "false testimony" accusing him of cooperating with traffickers.



In this Aug. 13, 2019 file photo, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández speaks to the reporters as he leaves a meeting at the Organization of American States, in Washington.

Associated Press

Hernández spoke before the Central American country's Congress on Wednesday, a day after several Democratic U.S. senators backed a bill calling on President Joe Biden to impose sanctions on Hernández and "determine whether he is a specially designated narcotics trafficker."

Hernández has repeatedly denied testimony by witnesses in U.S. drug prosecutions — one of which convicted his brother — accusing him of taking bribes from traffickers. He has not been charged, however.

On Wednesday, he again asserted that a group known as "Los Cachiros" were seeking vengeance

against him for allowing them to be extradited to the U.S. He said they "have been repeatedly lying in the most obvious way" in order to manipulate U.S. authorities into acting against the very Honduran officials pursuing them.

"It would mean, sooner or later, that the systems of effective cooperation that I helped build, that have been recognized and praised repeatedly by Washington, inevitably would collapse — and not only in Honduras, but in several countries of the Americas," he said.

On Tuesday, Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon introduced a bill that would seek to isolate Hernández, who in recent years has

leaned heavily on support within the U.S. government when facing domestic opposition and allegations of connections to drug traffickers.

"The United States cannot remain silent in the face of deeply alarming corruption and human rights abuses being committed at the highest levels of the Honduran government," Merkley said in a statement. "A failure to hold Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, national officials, and members of the police and military accountable for these crimes will fuel widespread poverty and violence and force more families to flee their communities in search of safety." □

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Locations: The Cove Mall (8AM-10PM) and Medcare at the Mill Resort (8:30AM-12:30PM).

Harbour House Aruba: “80 % sold already, we are doing great”

ORANJESTAD — Boosting a buyers confidence comes with a strong sales team, an established company name and experience. The Perret Group are the owners of among others Harbour House Aruba and they live up to the expectation. With 80 % of the condominiums sold in their residence they can do nothing more but be content. Take a look at this cool site reflecting best of two worlds: beach and city.

The residence consists of 94 units in the former 7-level Marazul building at the historical location of Paardenbaai. Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. Harbour House's sales manager explains why. “A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the

cake: an infinity pool.” Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates on construction are also



on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

“There are only a few units left, now we are working on the amenities like the pool that is almost finished. We are installing the Jacuzzi area on top and we have all the exterior windows in so we are right on schedule, expecting to deliver in September,” the sales manager explains.

The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. “When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$ 30.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be

discussed and are flexible. We assist also in financing by banks.”

The ground level of the building will provide a gallery of restaurants, art gallery, stores, and supermarket. “We get in more requests for renting and so far we have restaurant, salon, mini market, art gallery a craft beer factory which makes up for a great variation. A parking lot will be assigned to the owners and visitors.”

City elegance combined with tropical tranquility is what you get here. The panoramas are breathtaking. Can you imagine yourself with your favorite cup of joe, gazing out over the ocean while the city of Oranjestad is awakening? The new trend is to live tinier but comfy and Harbour House meets this market demand with the perfect product. Everything is close, you are centrally located, just a step away from the beach though right in the main area in Oranjestad. You have history to tell and you are within walking distance to all Oranjestad has to offer. What else do you need? ☐

For more information: <https://harbourhousearuba.com>

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Conservation of the water tank in Rancho

ORANJESTAD — In 2020 Monuments Fund Aruba finalized the restoration of the Lime Kiln. The project was combined with a course about the use of lime on historic buildings. Now SMFA will start working on the plans for the conservation of the Water Tank in the neighborhood of Rancho. In the case of the water tanks SMFA opted to conserve it in its current state in order to prevent further deterioration. It will not be restored but conserved.



ventive measures will be applied to prevent further deterioration. For this it is important to do a research of the materials to make sure not to use the wrong materials that can affect the original ones.

The difference between restoration and conservation is that when a building or monumental object is restored, the focus is to bring it back to its original state. Based on collected information, photographs, research on the monument itself and information from the original owners the building will be brought back to its original appearance. In this case the historical use over the years will not be visible anymore.

In the case of conservation, the focus is on historic research and documentation of the monuments in its current state and pre-

With respect to the water tank in Rancho, SMFA opted to conserve the tank in its current state. One of the reasons is that we do not have enough information or photographs that show how the tank was in 1905 after construction.

Andrew deGruchy, an expert in the restoration of historic buildings from Lime-works USA, will be on the island to do some research and give SMFA advice on how to use lime for the conservation of the tank. This will be the first monument on Aruba that will be conserved and will not undergo a complete restoration. The water tank in Rancho

is an industrial monument built in 1905 by Cornelis Hendrik Eman. From this tank water was sold to the neighbors. After the death of Cornelis in 1914, the tank was no longer used. The tank consists of two rings with the largest having a circumference of 23,20 meters.

About the Monument Fund Aruba

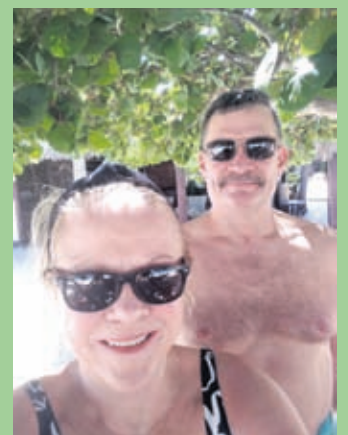
Since 1996, 'Stichting Monumentenfonds Aruba' (Monuments Fund Aruba) has primarily been involved in the funding of restoration and maintenance of protected monuments, and has been the financial institution in the field of heritage conservation. The fund owns 15 monuments, out of the 36 protected monuments in the island, but there are over 300 more monuments on the list to be protected. The international guidelines that apply for monuments decide whether it will be a protected monument or not. The building or object needs to be at least 50 years old, a special value in architecture or to history or to the people of Aruba is required and there has to be a certain uniqueness.

The Monument Fund Aruba is open every day from Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm. You are more than welcome to ask for information, guiding and help. For more information check out their Facebook page [stichting monumentenfonds aruba](https://www.facebook.com/stichtingmonumentenfondsaruba) and the website <http://www.monumentenfondsaruba.com>.



Aruba to me

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page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received an amazing story from **Ken and Paula Phillips** from Rhode Island, USA. They wrote:

"After a long year of isolating and not being social it was so well worth it. So wonderful to see our local friends again. Feeling very blessed and safe on this beautiful island".



Horacio Oduber

ORANJESTAD — Aruba has many great doctors nowadays, but just imagine being a doctor back then in the 1800's how primitive that seems and worst yet, with not even a hospital on the island. Doctor Horacio Eulogio Oduber (1862-1935) was the first Aruban physician. He was so loved and highly respected by the people. He even has a street bearing his name, Dr. Horacio Oduberstraat. It is not a well-known street, because it is rarely used. But it really does exist. You will find it behind the old country laboratory, parallel to the Hospitaalstraat in Oranjestad.

His parents were Francisco Oduber and Johanna Prudencia Eckmeyer, who were both born in Aruba in the year 1827. After his general education, "Acho", as he was affectionately known, set course at the age of 18 to the University of Maryland in the American city of Baltimore. A few years later he returned as an accomplished physician, the first Aruban to hold this title. Doctor Acho was a highly respected physician, who traveled around the island with a horse and cart (kietrien) to visit the sick. He was known as a sympathetic man with a young heart. Someone who had a personal relationship with his patients and who carried out his profession with great enthusiasm. His patient file consisted of the few thousand inhabitants that Aruba had at the time (eight thousand souls according to an estimate from 1910). They were predominantly farm laborers with little financial means. Often the doctor was paid naturally, either with beans, peanuts or other agricultural crops. His horse was not passed over. Especially for this animal, the households always kept a little bit of hay aside.

Doctor Oduber was a doctor at a time that seems almost primitive today. There was no electricity or running water on the island. No phone. No motorized transport. And medical science was also still in its infancy. Many people died of infections. Viruses or childhood diseases had never been heard of. Nor penicillin, blood transfusions or X-rays. The concept of bacteria



was well known, but was still far from being understood, let alone that therapy and prevention were aimed at it. All in all, there was not much a doctor could do other than bloodletting and warming limbs.

In addition, Dr. Oduber was faced with another problem in Aruba, namely the lack of a hospital. That is why patients sometimes slept with him; free. In his house on the Wilhelminastraat he had set up a few rooms especially for this. Here, incidentally, the doctor also performed all other activities that belong to a hospital, including operations. Amputations, for example. In the absence of opium or any other anesthetic, patients were first fed drunk with rum. In fact, you could say that the doctor's house at Wilhelminastraat was Aruba's first hospital.

Doctor Acho was married twice. First with Antonia Penso, later with Mariana Betanco. He had four sons and a daughter, namely Francisco (1884), Jacobo (1893), Johanna (1895), Polidor (1899) and Horacio (1905). Two of his sons, Francisco (Fanchi) and Jacobo (Cobito), both became doctors in adulthood. Fanchi married Constanza van der Biest in Venezuela in 1915 and continued to live and work in that country for a long time, because there was not enough work in Aruba at the time. It was not until 1944 that he came to Aruba with his family, when the expansion of the Lago had caused a population increase and there was a demand for more doctors.

The second son, Jacobo (Cobito), also chose his father's profession. And he also had to move to a different environment for work. He married Albertina de Veer and started his career in Cu-

raçao, which island he left when the demand for doctors in Aruba increased. Doctors Cobito and Fanchi both enjoyed good reputations, as did their old man.

When Aruba's first real hospital was constructed in 1976, the Executive Council organized a competition around the naming. Among the 138 entries were suggestions such as Mamona Hospital, Aruba Hospital, Dr. De la Fuente Hospital, Hospital Betico Croes and Hospital General di Aruba. Although the Dr. Horacio Oduberstraat already existed, younger generations were not familiar with the pioneer of Aruban healthcare. By then he had already died for over forty years.

Horacio's family was delighted with the final choice of the Executive Council. For instance, the youngest son, also called Horacio, wrote an English-language letter to committee member Alida (Dachi) Lampe in 1976 and thank every one of them for their thoughtfulness in remembering his father and consistently honor his name. "On my last visit to Aruba I saw the construction of the hospital in process and somehow I had an inner-feeling that my father would have rejoiced the project had he lived to see his beloved Aruba with such a hospital. I remember as a small boy that he used to lodge the operated persons without means in the rooms we had in our yard. Since the committee is composed of young people I wonder who could have brought up the bright idea of remembering my father. Again, thank you all."□

Source: Aruba Heritage



Dr. H. E. Oduber

U.S. pizza sales, booming in pandemic, start to slow

By DEE-ANN DURBIN

AP Business Writer

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) —

After a pandemic-fueled boom, U.S. pizza sales appear to be headed back to earth.

Domino's and Papa John's pizza chains both said Thursday that their same-store sales lost steam in the fourth quarter compared to the huge increases they saw earlier in 2020. Same-store sales are expected to continue seeing percentage declines well into this year. Pizza delivery remains popular, but diners' choices are expanding, with more restaurants now offering delivery. In a survey of 3,500 U.S. restaurant operators last fall, the National Restaurant Association found that 27% had added delivery from a third party like DoorDash, while 17% had added in-house delivery. Pizza could also be pressured as the pandemic eases and dining rooms reopen. "We aren't sure exactly what the new normal will look like," Domino's CEO Ritch Allison said Thursday during a conference call with analysts.

Louisville, Kentucky-based Papa John's said its North American same-store sales — or sales at stores open at least a year — rose 13.5% in the fourth quarter after sky-



This July 15, 2019, file photo shows a small Domino's pizza made in a Domino's Pizza shop in downtown Pittsburgh.

rocketing more than 20% in both the second and third quarters. For all of 2020, Papa John's same-store sales jumped 17.6% in North America. But they're only expected to be up 2% this year, according to analysts surveyed by FactSet.

Ann Arbor-based Domino's said its same-store sales were up 11% in the October-December period. That was short of Wall Street's forecasts, and below the 17.5% growth the company

saw in the third quarter and the 16% growth it saw in the second quarter.

For the full year, Domino's U.S. same-store sales were up 11.5%, well ahead of the 3.2% growth they saw in 2019. But this year, analysts expect they will rise just 1% as sales tumble from their pandemic highs.

Domino's shares dropped 8% to \$334.32 in midday trading Thursday. Papa John's shares fell 16% to \$86.10.

Allison said the lack of federal stimulus checks impacted demand in the fourth quarter, and the resurgent virus hurt carryout orders. But he also acknowledged that many independent restaurants, which weren't emphasizing delivery before the pandemic, are now stronger competitors.

"They jumped with both feet into delivery to stay alive," Allison said in a conference call with investors.

Pizza delivery is also facing a challenge from big chains. McDonald's says its U.S. delivery demand doubled in 2020. Taco Bell also saw higher delivery sales last year. Uber Eats, one of the largest third-party delivery brands in the U.S., said its active restaurant partners grew by 75% in the fourth quarter compared to the same period a year ago. Pizza companies aren't the only brands facing slowdowns from pandemic highs. Electronics chain Best Buy said Thursday it laid off 5,000 workers this month as it anticipates cooling consumer demand.

Allison said Domino's will focus on growing carryout orders this year. They had been strong before the pandemic but slowed during lockdowns.

Domino's, which uses its own drivers, also hopes to beat third parties like DoorDash by charging less for delivery and opening more outlets, so orders come to customers more quickly. With the economy still rattled, customers are looking for value, Allison said.

"When you think about what it costs to have food delivered to feed a family of four, we really like our positioning in that space," he said. □

Associated Press

Digital exchange Coinbase takes a step toward going public

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN

AP Business Writer

Coinbase has filed papers with U.S. regulators to become a publicly traded company as digital currencies continue to march toward mainstream acceptance.

The digital currency exchange is seeking a direct listing, which would allow company insiders and early investors to convert their stakes in Coinbase into publicly traded stock.

In a Thursday filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Coinbase also revealed how interest in digital currency is gaining steam on the exchange.

Revenue more than doubled to \$1.14 billion in 2020

and the company swung to a profit of \$322.3 million after losing tens of millions the previous year.

Coinbase is taking the step toward becoming public at a time when chatter about cryptocurrencies is everywhere, even at the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Tesla this month said that it was buying \$1.5 billion in Bitcoin as part of a new investment strategy, and that it would soon be accepting Bitcoin as payment for its electric cars.

Also this month, BNY Mellon, the oldest bank in the U.S., said it would include digital currencies in the services it provides to clients. Mastercard said it would start supporting "select crypto cur-

rencies" on its network. And Blue Ridge Bank of Charlottesville, Virginia, said it would allow cardholders to purchase and redeem Bitcoin at 19 of its ATMs.

But volatility currently makes the use of digital currency for the exchange for goods and services untenable.

This month, the price of a single Bitcoin exceeded \$50,000 for the first time. Its value is up 450% over the past year, down 8% this week, and up 4% Thursday. An early digital currency adopter, billionaire Chalmath Palihapitiya, tweeted this month that he bought an empty lot in Lake Tahoe using \$1.6 million in Bitcoin in 2014. He converted that



In this Dec. 8, 2017, file photo, a man uses a Bitcoin ATM in Hong Kong.

Associated Press

pricetag to the equivalent of what he would have paid in February, or what he would have in his pocket if he had just held on to his Bitcoin: \$27.5 million.

Coinbase Global Inc. is looking to list on the Nasdaq under the ticker symbol "COIN." It won't raise any proceeds from the listing. □

Bats, birds among wildlife pummeled during Southern freeze



A Mexican Free-tailed bat barely hangs on under the bridge at Waugh Drive in Buffalo Bayou Park after being impacted by the winter storm Monday, Feb. 22, 2021, in Houston.

By **JOHN FLESHER and JAMIE STENGLE**

Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — As many people in the southern U.S. hosted neighbors who had no heat or water during the vicious February storm and deep freeze, Kate Rugroden provided a refuge for shell-shocked bats. Starving and disoriented, the winged mammals tumbled to the snow-coated ground as temperatures plunged to levels rarely seen in the region.

"They burned through their energy reserves as they tried to wake up and get away from the cold and ice," said Rugroden, of Arlington, Texas, one of numerous rehabilitation specialists nursing stranded bats plucked up by sympathetic people. "And there aren't any insects out there for them to eat yet."

Bats are among numerous wildlife believed to have taken a beating in the South, a region unaccustomed to such a severe and prolonged cold snap. Many species migrate there for winter precisely because of its normally mild weather.

It might take weeks or months to determine the

extent of the harm, but anecdotal evidence is already turning up — including dead robins on yards and sidewalks.

Alligators in Oklahoma's Red Slough Wildlife Management Area were photographed with snouts protruding from frozen waterways — a survival maneuver enabling them to breathe while their bodies go dormant to conserve energy.

Fish kills were feared in Arkansas and Louisiana. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department said it expected casualties among exotic deer and antelope. Across the Gulf of Mexico coast as far east as Florida, naturalists worried about monarch butterflies and the milkweed plants essential to their survival as they prepare to migrate northward. "Animals can respond to events like this by moving elsewhere, but if it's beyond your flight range or your walking range you have to hunker down," said Perry Barboza, a wildlife biologist at Texas A&M University. "Some animals like small birds can do it just a night or two. The duration becomes the killer."

Sea turtles stunned by frigid

Gulf coastal waters were still being cared for at facilities this week. More than 10,600 had been found and officials were tabulating how many died, said Donna Shaver, Texas coordinator for the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network.

Sea Turtle Inc. took in so many that it used the South Padre Island Convention Center to accommodate the overflow, executive director Wendy Knight said. "Our hospital is now completely filled to the gills," Knight said.

Fish kills along the Texas coast were expected for recreational favorites such as spotted sea trout and red drum. In Louisiana, officials said it could take a week for dead fish to wash ashore.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission warned anglers to expect die-offs of threadfin shad, a primary food source for lake species such as bass, walleye and crappie.

While extreme weather is particularly dangerous for imperiled species, the whooping crane — listed by the federal government as endangered — appears to have weathered

the storm, said Joe Saenz, manager of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas.

About 500 of the majestic birds spend winters at the refuge before returning to Canadian nesting grounds. During the cold spell, some were spotted feasting on dead fish floating on the Gulf waters.

Biologists are concerned about monarch butterflies, which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in December designated as a candidate for endangered or threatened status because of a sharp decline in recent decades.

The biggest monarch population winters in Mexican mountains and begins its northward trek in March. Had the cold spell happened a few weeks later, the orange-and-black butterflies could have been devastated, said Ray Moranz, an Oklahoma-based scientist.

They still might not escape unscathed. Some typically spend winters along the Gulf coast, where their odds during the deep freeze were poor, said Moranz, of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

Another potential danger is to milkweed, which provides spots for female monarchs to lay eggs and food for their larvae.

If the plants' growth across the South is stunted, more young would not survive. That situation underscores a hazard for wildlife across the region: Even those that made it through the freeze might see damaged habitat and less food.

In South Texas, bur clover, a winter weed crucial for deer in spring, was showing freeze burn.

Long-term, the biggest concerns are for birds and bats, both of which had absorbed heavy blows even before the storm.

Breeding bird populations in the U.S. and Canada have plummeted nearly 30 percent in the past 50 years — primarily because of habitat loss. Spring population counts will offer the first indication of how many succumbed to the cold, said Barboza of Texas A&M. Migratory birds don't bother fattening up for winter because food in the South is plentiful, he said.

During the storm, many probably burned through their meager energy reserves and died of exhaustion. About 20 dead brown pelicans were found on Texas' Chester Island.

"You worry about food sources covered in snow — seeds and berries — and a decrease in insect life," said Ben Jones, executive director of the Texas Conservation Alliance, who found five dead birds in his yard last weekend.

Robins, bluebirds, hermit thrushes and gray catbirds were among hard-hit types, he said.

Frozen songbirds also were spotted on streets in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where temperatures plunged to minus-13 degrees last week.

Bats have their own challenges, including a fungal disease called white-nose syndrome that has killed millions.

To those struggling to save them, every bat is precious. They eat huge numbers of insects that consume farm crops and carry diseases. □

AT&T spinning off DirecTV after losing millions of customers

By TALI ARBEL

AP Technology Writer

AT&T is spinning off its DirecTV into a new company for a fraction of the \$48.5 billion it paid for the satellite TV service in 2015. DirecTV has lost millions of customers on AT&T's watch, and is valued in the deal at just \$16.25 billion, including debt. Private equity firm TPG will own 30% of the business, while AT&T holds the rest. The telecom company will receive \$7.8 billion in cash, including \$1.8 billion from TPG and and \$5.8 billion from the new DirecTV firm, which is borrowing that sum. The new DirecTV will also take on \$200 million in debt from AT&T.

AT&T launched its streaming service HBO Max last year and has focused on building that business. It also owns TV networks like CNN and TBS along with the Warner Bros. movie studio in addition to its huge wireless and internet business.

AT&T said the deal will strengthen its balance sheet and let it focus on the expensive task of upgrading its wireless network with next-generation 5G technology. That update requires expensive investments in radio spectrum — it just spent \$23.4 billion for bandwidth in the latest U.S. government auction — and AT&T also plans to plow more resources into fiber-optic internet infrastructure and HBO Max.

AT&T will use the deal proceeds to pay down debt. The new DirecTV company will include AT&T TV, a streaming version of cable TV, and U-verse, AT&T's older cable service. AT&T will retain its Latin America DirecTV business. AT&T said it expects "few to no changes" for subscribers. The deal is expected to close in the second half of the year.

"It's fair to say that some aspects of the (DirecTV) transaction have not played out as we had planned, such as pay TV households in the U.S. declining at a faster pace across the industry than



This file combo made from file photos shows the AT&T logo on the side of a corporate office in Springfield, Ill., left, and a DirecTV satellite dish atop a home in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

anticipated," AT&T wrote. U.S. and Canadian subscribers to cable or satellite television services dropped by 27 million between 2010 and 2020, and fell by 6 million in 2020 alone, said Digi-

tal TV Research. A burst of new streaming services have recently emerged to compete with Netflix, including HBO Max, Disney+ and NBCUniversal's Peacock. AT&T's video business

has lost 6.7 million customers over the past two years, and claimed 17.2 million subscribers at the end of 2020. □

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By Dave Green

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	5			1				

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2/26

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Dear Sir or Madam: Paul McCartney memoir due out in November

By HILLEL ITALIE
AP National Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Paul McCartney is finally ready to write his memoirs, and will use music — and a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet — to help guide him. “The Lyrics: 1956 to the Present” will be released Nov. 2, according to a joint announcement Wednesday from the British publisher Allen Lane and from Liveright in the United States. McCartney, 78, will trace his life through 154 songs, from his teens and early partnership with fellow Beatle John Lennon to his solo work over the past half century. Irish poet Paul Muldoon is editing and will contribute an introduction.

“More often than I can count, I’ve been asked if I would write an autobiography, but the time has never been right,” McCartney said in a statement. “The one thing I’ve always managed to do, whether at home or on the road, is to write new songs. I know that some people, when they get to a certain age, like to go to a diary to recall day-to-day events from the past, but I have no such notebooks. What I do have are my songs, hundreds of



Paul McCartney appears during his One on One Tour in Tinley Park, Ill., on July 26, 2017, left, and poet Paul Muldoon appears at the 2019 PEN America Literary Gala in New York on May 21, 2019.
Associated Press

them, which I’ve learned serve much the same purpose. And these songs span my entire life.” Financial terms for “The Lyrics,” which has a list price of \$100, were not disclosed. Publishers have long sought a McCartney memoir, even though he has spoken often about the past and has participated in such projects as Barry Miles’ biography “Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now,”

and the 1990s documentary and book “The Beatles Anthology.” The Rolling Stones’ Keith Richards has been equally open about himself, but his 2010 memoir “Life” still sold millions of copies. No Beatle has written a standard, full-fledged account of his life. Lennon published two works of stories, poems and drawings and was considered the most gifted with words, but

he was murdered in 1980, at age 40. Ringo Starr’s “Another Day In the Life” is centered on photographs and quotes, because, the drummer has said, a traditional memoir would require multiple volumes. George Harrison, who died of cancer in 2001, issued the scrapbook/retrospective “I, Me, Mine” in 1980. According to McCartney’s publishers, his songs will be arranged alphabetically,

and will include McCartney’s comments on when and where they were written and what inspired them. The U.S. edition of the book will be broken into two volumes, contained within a single box. “Presented with this is a treasure trove of material from McCartney’s personal archive — drafts, letters, photographs — never seen before, which make this also a unique visual record of one of the greatest songwriters of all time,” according to Wednesday’s announcement. McCartney has often received more acclaim for his melodies than for his lyrics, but he has written some of the most quoted songs in recent history, including “Let It Be,” “Hey Jude” and “Eleanor Rigby.” Muldoon said in a statement that their conversations in recent years “confirm a notion at which we had but guessed — that Paul McCartney is a major literary figure who draws upon, and extends, the long tradition of poetry in English.” Muldoon is known for such poetry collections as “Moy Sand and Gravel” and “Horse Latitudes,” and also has a background in music. □

Rarely seen Van Gogh painting exhibited ahead of auction



Sotheby’s personnel display « Scene de rue à Montmartre » (Street scene in Montmartre), a painting by Dutch master Vincent van Gogh at Sotheby’s auction house in Paris, Thursday, Feb. 25, 202.

Associated Press

By SYLVIE CORBET and OLEG CETINIC
Associated Press
PARIS (AP) — A rare painting by Dutch impressionist master Vincent van Gogh of a street scene in the

Parisian neighborhood of Montmartre will be publicly displayed for the first time before its auction next month. Sotheby’s auction house said the work, painted in

1887, has remained in the same family collection for more than 100 years — out of the public eye. It will be exhibited next month in Amsterdam, Hong Kong and Paris ahead of an auction scheduled on March 25 in the French capital. “It’s an important painting in the oeuvre of Vincent van Gogh because it dates from the period in which he’s living in Paris with his brother, Theo,” Etienne Hellman, senior director of Impressionist and Modern Art at Sotheby’s, told the Associated Press. Van Gogh moved to Paris in 1886 and lived in Montmartre. He left the capital in 1888 for southern France, where he lived until his death in 1890. “Before this, his paintings

are much darker... In Paris he discovers color,” Hellman said. “Color blows up into the painting.” “Street Scene in Montmartre” depicts a windmill named the Pepper Mill, seen from the street under a bright sky, with a man, a woman and a little girl walking in front of wooden palisades that surrounded the place. Sotheby’s said the painting has been published in seven catalogues before but has never been exhibited. Claudia Mercier, auctioneer of Mirabaud Mercier house, said “it is also an important painting because there are very, very few of them remaining in private hands... especially from that period, most are in museums now.” Sotheby’s has estimated

the painting’s value between 5 and 8 million euros (between \$6.1 and \$9.8 million). It which did not reveal the identity of the owner. It will be on display in Amsterdam on March 1-3, Hong-King on March 9-12 and Paris on March 16-23. The Pepper Mill was destroyed during the construction of an avenue in 1911, but two similar windmills are still present today on the Montmartre hill. □

9	4	8	7	5	1	6	2	3
6	2	5	4	3	8	7	9	1
7	1	3	2	9	6	4	8	5
3	9	1	6	4	7	8	5	2
2	7	4	1	8	5	3	6	9
5	8	6	3	2	9	1	4	7
4	6	2	5	7	3	9	1	8
1	3	9	8	6	2	5	7	4
8	5	7	9	1	4	2	3	6

Golf without Woods? Battered leg brings it closer to reality

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

The PGA Tour without Tiger Woods was always inevitable purely because of age. His shattered right leg from his SUV flipping down a hill on a sweeping road through coastal Los Angeles suburbs only brings that closer.

Golf wasn't ready Wednesday to contemplate the future of its biggest star after the 10th and most complicated surgery on the 45-year-old Woods. There was more relief that he was alive.

"Listen, when Tiger wants to talk about golf, we'll talk about golf," Commissioner Jay Monahan said at the World Golf Championship in Florida. "When you're going to overcome what he needs to overcome, I think the love of all of our players and everybody out here, it's going to come forward in a big way and across the entire sporting world."

"I think he'll feel that energy and I think that's what we should all focus on."

Woods made it clear what he faces with an update posted early Wednesday to social media by his team that outlined the "long surgical procedure" at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. Anish Mahajan, the chief medical officer, said Woods shattered tibia and fibula bones on his right leg in multiple locations. Those were stabilized by a rod in the tibia. He said a combination of screws and pins were used to stabilize additional injuries in the ankle and foot.

Four previous surgeries to repair ligaments were done on the left knee. This is the first major trauma to the right leg. Woods has had five surgeries on his lower back in the last seven years. The most recent was in December, a microdiscectomy to remove a pressurized disk that was pinching a nerve.

"I would say, unfortunately, it's very, very unlikely that he returns to be a professional golfer after these injuries," said Dr. Michael Gardner, chief of orthopedic trauma at Stanford



Tiger Woods watches his tee shot on the first hole during the first round of the PNC Championship golf tournament in Orlando, Fla., in this Dec. 19, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

Medical Center. "His age, his multiple back issues, this is going to be a very long road ahead if he chooses to attempt to return to his previous level of golfing." Can golf do without the player singularly responsible for its growth?

His watershed victory in the 1997 Masters sent media interest in golf soaring. More than just the first player of Black heritage in a green jacket, he won at a more prolific rate than anyone in history. The timing was impeccable, for the PGA Tour negotiated a television contract that made prize money spike.

Woods won his first tournament as a 20-year-old in the 1996 Las Vegas Invitational, where the total purse was \$1.65 million. At the World Golf Championship this week, first place alone is worth \$1.82 million. Woods made everyone rich.

What now?

The PGA Tour has been down this road before.

Ten years ago, when Woods

was still smarting from the sordid revelations of serial adultery and missed three months with more injuries, the PGA Tour negotiated a nine-year television deal with increased rights fees. There was no assurance Woods could get back to the top of his game.

Woods was playing a small schedule even when he was younger and healthier. He has never played more than 21 times in a year on the PGA Tour, which stages events in 46 weeks this season. He also tends to return to the same courses. But when he plays, and there isn't a pandemic, no one needs to study TV ratings to measure his impact. Fans often stand six and seven rows deep behind tees and greens to get a look. No other player attracts that kind of attention. The top 10 in the world combined don't do that.

Woods doesn't move the needle. Woods is the needle.

"It's always great when he plays at a tournament or is

out here because it gives that tournament an extra dimension that it usually doesn't," four-time major champion Rory McIlroy said. "We were all sort of heading towards that day that Tiger wasn't going to be a part of the game."

Woods had only one top-10 finish last year, and that was before the pandemic. Even after golf returned, he waited an additional month to get started. He played only seven times since July and never cracked the top 35. He remains one victory short of his 83rd victory, which would set a PGA Tour record, the one most reasonable for him to break. That was before the crash. McIlroy already has seen one comeback. He often talks about having lunch one day with Woods in Florida, right after Woods' fourth back surgery to fuse his lower spine. He saw the pain. And two years later, he saw Woods win the Masters for a fifth time, his 15th major.

"I don't want to take any-

thing away from what Ben Hogan did after his car crash or any of the other comebacks that athletes have had in other sports, but right now I can't think of any greater comeback in sports than the journey that he made from that lunch we had in 2017 to winning the Masters a couple years later," McIlroy said.

Hogan threw himself in front of his wife right before they were struck by a Greyhound bus in 1949. He broke his pelvis, collarbone and left ankle, chipped a rib and had blood clots that left him with circulation problems the rest of his life. Hogan was 36 at the time. What the future holds for Woods and for the tour is not anything players were ready to embrace.

"At this stage, I think everyone should just be grateful that he's here, that he's alive, that his kids haven't lost their dad," McIlroy said. "That's the most important thing. Golf is so far from the equation right now, it's not even on the map." □

Hamlin slaps down speculation over JGR's youth movement

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer
CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) —

Denny Hamlin is NASCAR's current points leader and locked in at Joe Gibbs Racing with a contract extension inked at the start of his 17th season with the organization.

So when an analyst suggested Hamlin and the JGR veterans should be worried about their job security, well, Hamlin took that personally.

Hamlin slapped down a segment that dissected last weekend's wins by JGR drivers Ty Gibbs and Christopher Bell. Gibbs won the Xfinity Series race in his first career NASCAR national series start, then Bell scored his first Cup Series victory in his second start driving for JGR.

"If I'm a veteran driver in the Gibbs organization, I'm looking over my shoulder and in the rearview mirror because I'm watching my replacement out there win race, win races at the Xfinity level, win races at the Cup level," said Kyle Petty, an analyst and former driver.

Hamlin initially responded on Twitter then further explained his annoyance in a Wednesday media session. "I'm not sure who I can equate it to in another sports world, but essentially someone else that's at the top of their game, and (an-



Ricky Stenhouse Jr., left, and Denny Hamlin talks on pit road before the first of two qualifying NASCAR auto races for the Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway, Thursday, Feb. 11, 2021, in Daytona Beach, Fla.

alysts are) like, 'Oh, this guy scored 30 off the bench, he's coming for your starting position,' OK?" Hamlin said.

It's worth noting that Hamlin and Petty have had a tense relationship since 2007 when Hamlin, in his second Cup season, ran into the back of Petty's lapped car at Dover. An irate Petty leaned into Hamlin's car and slapped down Hamlin's helmet visor after chastising the young driver. The two have been cordial, at best, since. It is not unusual for interest to skyrocket in young drivers following a strong

on-track showing. And it is particularly common when it comes to JGR; Toyota has a deep driver development system but has only five seats in the Cup Series to graduate its talent. Four of those seats are held by Joe Gibbs Racing. Hamlin, a three-time Daytona 500 winner, and former Cup champion Martin Truex Jr. both signed extensions for the season-opening race. Two-time Cup champion Kyle Busch signed his latest contract in 2019. Bell, who is 26, is a longtime Toyota-backed driver who got a Gibbs seat in his second season of Cup racing.

The Toyota pipeline is deep and JGR has a full crop of young talent in the the Xfinity Series with 24-year-old Brandon Jones and Harrison Burton, who is 20. Ty Gibbs, the 18-year-old grandson of the team owner, has entered the picture with his surprise Saturday win on Daytona's road course.

JGR has never had enough seats to accommodate all the Toyota drivers so the future of the youngsters is a popular ongoing debate. Hamlin took exception, though, to industry insiders suggesting proven veterans should be concerned

about their jobs.

"I can understand it coming from fans because they're not prefaced to information that analysts or media are," he said. "So my thing was just like 'Have you watched one race in the last two years? Have you seen any articles about re-signing?' It just dumb-founds me."

Brad Keselowski also bristled at the segment. The 14-year veteran and former Cup champion is in a one-year contract with Team Penske and waging a fight to prove talent trumps all other qualities. Because Keselowski is paid at the high end of the driver salary market, he knows he can be replaced by an unproven youngster for a fraction of Keselowski's paycheck.

"This is all so crazy," Keselowski responded to Hamlin on Twitter. "Are you younger and can we pay you less? Do you have any followers on social media? Yes? We like you! There are tons of great young drivers, but the hype train is insane."

Hamlin's rebuke began on social media, which has once again become his sounding board. He was one of the first NASCAR drivers to use Twitter to engage with fans and fellow drivers, but NASCAR fined him in 2010 for criticizing the series and Hamlin scaled back his online presence. □

Associated Press



Phoenix Suns guard Devin Booker (1) drives past Charlotte Hornets guard Terry Rozier (3) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021, in Phoenix.

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Phoenix Suns guard Devin Booker was selected Wednesday to replace injured Los Angeles Lakers forward An-

thony Davis in the NBA All-Star Game.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver choose Booker to take Davis' spot a day after

Suns' Booker replaces Lakers' Davis in NBA All-Star Game

Booker was snubbed by the league's head coaches for a reserve spot in the March 7 game in Atlanta. Booker received a big ovation from the home crowd Wednesday night when the sixth-year guard was announced as a two-time All-Star during the starting lineup introductions. Coach Monty Williams said pregame that the honor was well deserved.

"The situation at the time was a bit weird for us when Devin didn't get the call, but we're grateful for what has transpired over the last

few hours and we're just happy for Book," Williams said. After Booker was snubbed Tuesday night, there was a chorus of disbelief from some of the league's top players, including LeBron James. "Devin Booker is the most disrespected player in our league!!! Simple as that," the Lakers star tweeted. Booker said he tried to not to get frustrated by the initial snub and looks forward to another All-Star experience. "I focus on my family, my close ones around me," Booker said. "They

did a good job of keeping me very humble and down to earth. At the end of the day it is bigger than this basketball thing and the entertainment behind it and the politics behind it. "I am getting to the age of finally understanding that." Davis, voted in as a reserve, is sidelined by a strained right calf.

Booker has received both of his All-Star selections as an injury replacement. He's averaging 24.7 points, 4.3 assists, 3.8 rebounds and shooting a career-high 50.1% from the field. □